

## **Historic, Archive Document**

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.



LIBRARY  
RECEIVED  
JAN 25 1905  
U. S. Department of Agriculture.

# United States Department of Agriculture,

## DIVISION OF PUBLICATIONS.

WASHINGTON, D. C., November 10, 1905.

### ORRIS ROOT CULTURE.

Referring to the very large number of inquiries received at the U. S. Department of Agriculture in regard to the subject of orris root cultivation in the United States, Prof. Rodney H. True, Physiologist in Charge of Drug Plant Investigations, Bureau of Plant Industry, makes the following statement:

As is well known, the orris root of commerce is grown almost exclusively in Italy, the chief centers of production being at Florence and Verona. The plants yielding this article are the common species of Iris, especially *I. flor-entina*, *I. germanica*, and *I. pallida*, cultivated widely as the common fleur-de-lis of many gardens. In many letters, advertisements are cited in which the cultivation of orris root is boomed as a quick road to wealth, and the conditions of the market are described in glowing but entirely misleading terms. One advertisement states that orris root is worth 40 cents per pound, is protected by a duty of 25 per cent, and meets with an annual demand equaling \$2,000,000. On this basis, an offer of roots for cultivation is made at an excessive price. As a matter of fact, the average price of dried orris root of commercial grade varied between 3.8 and 9.6 cents per pound during the period from 1897 to 1904, inclusive. There is no duty on orris root. The total importation averages about \$20,000 annually. During the last two years the orris business in Italy has been in a somewhat dubious state, due to the low price realized and the lack of profit to the grower. Owing to such deceiving statements as above cited, there is a great likelihood that many people will be misled to their financial loss. Some advertisers claim to have the indorsement of the Department of Agriculture, whereas the Department has in no way suggested the culture of orris except on a small scale in a purely experimental way. It is of the opinion that the outlook for building up the orris industry in the United States is at present not good. Although a limited demand may arise for roots for purposes of cultivation, one should not fail to remember that an orris industry can be built up only on the basis of the utilization of the root in a commercial way.

102